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Using the Media Effectively

By Susan Freidmann

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The media has the power to influence your tradeshow efforts whether it be in television, radio or print. Your job is to target your endeavors to create a positive company image and brand awareness of your products/services. How do you do that? Outlined below are 27 important points to help maximize your tradeshow effort.

Before the show

1. Define and select your target audience so that you can tailor your message directly to the needs, concerns and interests of your prospects.
2. Ask show management for a comprehensive media list complete with contact name, address, phone number and email address of all trade, business and local press, radio and TV stations. Also ask them about their media plan for the show.
3. Find out which publications are planning a show edition and their deadline for press releases. Realize that many of the trade journals work several months in advance.
4. Build a working relationship with the press. Get to know the editors and writers. Volunteer to be a resource for them. Ask about particular stories they are working on and consider information you may have to help them.
5. Realize that editors are interested in timely newsworthy information; industry trends, statistics, new technology or product information; interesting material, such as, do-it-yourself tips, techniques, or strategies; useful advice; human interest stories, including celebrities you have coming to the show.
6. Investigate other media possibilities not covering the show who might still be interested in information. For example, chamber of commerce magazines/newsletters; local and regional business magazines; industry-specific newsletters; cable television or local talk radio programs.

Using the Media Effectively

7. Understand the do's and don'ts of press kits. A press kit should include interesting and timely information; a one–page company bio sheet – corporate structure, executive staff chart, sales figures; complete product information – specs, distribution methods, pricing; good product photos; key contacts. Don't include outdated, false or exaggerated information; photos of your CEO or top executives.

8. Minimize your press kit information so that it is lightweight and easy to fit into a bag or briefcase. If your company is relatively unknown, be creative with your press kit folder, for example bright neon colors or graphics attract attention. Save on fancy, expensive folders as they do not impress the media. Exciting newsworthy information is what they want.

9. Reserve press conferences for major announcements, new product introductions, but only if they are truly new or improved, or general industry trends – what's hot and what's not. The media get very upset

attending a press conference which is poorly organized and where nothing newsworthy is shared.

10. Post your press kit online to make your company news available to the media, industry experts and consumers before, during and after the event with Online Press Kits from PR Newswire. Online Press Kits increase traffic to your trade show booth and extend your reach far beyond the exhibition floor when you let all important audiences access your press kit information. Your corporate information is always at hand and lives on long after the event.

11. Mail, broadcast fax or e–mail press releases about your product/service focusing on what's new. For example, highlighting a new application or new market. Wherever possible include statistics. Always have a contact name and number along with your booth location.

12. Arrange interviews with editors several weeks prior to the show. The media will usually decide at the last minute whether or not to attend. Continue to send them updated information and photos so they remember your company name. Look for specific angles to interest the different media.

13. Have a plan in case a crisis occurs immediately prior to the show, for example, your CEO resigns, or there is a takeover bid for your company. Be prepared with answers to the media's and visitors' awkward questions.

14. Use your website to display useful advice as well as promoting your show participation. Make an offer on your website for visitors to collect important information, such as an executive report, when they visit your booth.

During the show

15. Keep the press office well–stocked with your press kits. Also keep some press kits in your booth in case the media stop by.

16. Have a media spokesperson in your booth at all times, even over the lunch hour. Be prepared to explain your product and its importance in easy–to–understand, nontechnical terms.

Using the Media Effectively

17. Keep show management informed of newsworthy information for the show daily, and also in case reporters call in looking for story ideas.

18. Heighten visibility and create positive publicity through sponsorship opportunities.

Various media covering the event may automatically include sponsors names and/or photos, which can often generate coverage that might otherwise not be available.

19. Ask show management about opportunities to conduct presentations, seminars, or workshops. As a speaker, you are perceived as an industry expert. Some conferences request proposals to be submitted many months prior to the event.

20. Have a handout for your presentation with company contact information clearly marked on all pages. Have a page outlining what your company does. During your session offer something for free – a copy of the presentation, a special industry report, checklist, or tip sheet, and have participants come to the booth to collect it.

21. Use newsletters, special reports, audio cassettes, books/booklets, or computer discs/CDS as effective giveaways. These have a high perceived value and are more likely to be kept. Make sure they contain valuable industry–related information.

After the show

22. Send post–show press releases reporting trends, statistics or information on significant newsworthy information/orders that resulted from the show.

23. Collate all publicized articles and media coverage before, during and after the show, and send them to top management and your sales force. Include the best articles in mailings to customers and prospects.

24. Create a state of the industry report based on your observations at the show and send it out or offer it free to prospects/customers responding to a post–show mailing.

25. Send your customers and key prospects an audiocassette tape of your presentation or interesting interviews that took place during the show.

26. Include valuable show information in your company newsletter.

27. Encourage readers to contact you by including an offer and how to get it. For example, you could have readers contact you for a copy of your newsletter, free booklet or free information/report.

Finally, remember that your target audience are information seekers, always on the lookout for advice, ideas and information to help them. Your information must appeal to your target audience's self–interest while at the time promoting your own.

Turning your media pitch into a media hit

By Todd Brabender

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Anyone who has ever read a book on sales or taken a sales course has heard it – on average it takes anywhere from 3 to 10 contacts before a sale is reached. Although sales and publicity are very different animals, the same rule of thumb applies when pitching your release/story idea to the media. Because of the Internet and email, media outlets today are bombarded with hundreds if not thousands of media pitches each week. So, it's more important than ever that to make sure your release gets noticed. This doesn't mean pitching to more media outlets — it means your publicist or PR staff should take the time to pitch to your specific media market multiple times.

Whether you pitched the release yourself or hired someone to do it for you — did the release make contact? Sure it arrived, but is that the release that editor needs that day, for that article or for that issue. Hopefully so, but many times that is not the case. So the release is either saved for future use (again hopefully) or more than likely it is set aside, trashed or deleted. The releases/pitches that get used are the ones that are, in fact, newsworthy, media-friendly and arrive at opportune times. As you might imagine a perfect combination of all three translates into your best chances of media coverage and publicity.

Using a release distribution service gets your release pitched ONCE. But the most successful campaigns are those that are strategically and effectively maintained and/or re-pitched with calculated frequency. Most media outlets don't or can't respond to your initial release or pitch. Based on my professional experience as a PR/Publicity specialist, I would estimate that media placements occur in the following manner:

25% occur after the 1st – 2nd pitch
50% occur after the 3rd – 5th pitch
25% occur after the 6th – 8th pitch

Sometimes (in fact most times) a strong placement happens when a release hits an editor at the right place at the right time. Sure you may have pitch that media contact three times over the last few weeks, but perhaps that reporter/editor/producer didn't have the time or the editorial space to work your release into a placement. Your opportunity for placements increases with meticulous, media follow-ups and re-pitches. What many business owners/entrepreneurs don't realize is the majority of media outlets fail to respond until after the third or fourth pitch. I continue to be amazed and

Using the Media Effectively

amused at the editor/producer who, upon receiving my pitch for the fourth

time, says "I'm so glad you reminded me of this release!" or "Great timing! This will fit perfectly in a feature we're doing this week/month!" If the release had just been pitched once and not followed up, those placements would not have taken place.

So make sure your PR staff or the company you've hired isn't afraid to wind up and pitch your campaign multiple times. Just like in baseball, the more pitches there are – the better chances you get to make a hit.

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